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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000297

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [SO](#) [YE](#)

SUBJECT: (C) YEMENIS ASK CODEL FOR HELP IN SAADA; PRESENT
WEAK EVIDENCE OF IRANIAN LINKS

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR THOMAS C. KRAJESKI, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: President Saleh asked CODEL Reyes on February 19 to support on an urgent basis the Yemeni Government's military campaign against insurrectionists in Saada with intelligence, equipment and armored vehicles. Interior Minister Rashad al-Alimi warned that anti-government fighters in Saada are also planning to hit Saudi oil facilities, so the USG and Yemen must "act now" to stop them. The Minister handed the CODEL a file that he said substantiated the Government's claims of Iranian involvement in the conflict. Embassy reviewed the file and did not find any evidence to support allegations of links between the insurrectionists and Iran. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) During an unusually lengthy meeting with visiting CODEL Reyes that covered a number of other topics (septel), President Saleh reiterated his request to Ambassador the previous day for USG support to the Yemeni Government for its military campaign in Saada. Saleh said that 50 government soldiers had been killed and 250 injured in just one week of fighting, and the Government urgently needs intelligence, equipment and armored vehicles in order to counter fighters loyal to Abdulmalik al-Houthi. Saleh said the USG should consider bringing the vehicles from a nearby location, such as Jordan, Oman or Turkey, as this is a time-sensitive request.

¶3. (C) In a separate meeting hosted by Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi and Minister Alimi, Political Security Organization Director Ali al-Qamish explained, "We believe the al-Houthi problem comes directly from Iran." The Iranian regime wants influence in the region by working through groups that are ideologically sympathetic, he said, in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. Iran began culturally preparing Yemenis in Saada in the 1990s, and are now hoping to replace the Government in Saada, and perhaps all of Yemen. The al-Houthis were responsible for planning to attack the Embassy with rockets and assassinate the Ambassador in 2005. They take advantage of "emotions on the street" by adopting the slogan, "Death to America, Death to Israel," Qamish

explained.

¶4. (C) The al-Houthis, Qamish continued, depend on Iran as their "main funding source," as well as individuals from Bahrain, Qatar and elsewhere who "share their belief in twelver Islam." Because of the tension between Libya and Saudi Arabia, the Libyan President also provides funding to the al-Houthis, in order to "settle scores with the Saudis." The Government tried to solve the Saada conflict through dialogue, but the al-Houthis insist on carrying weapons against the state, Qamish explained. National Security Bureau Deputy Director Ammar Saleh, who was also in the meeting, added that Yemen needs U.S. support to counter the spread of Iranian influence and for "fighting these terrorists just like we do al-Qaida." (NOTE: Neither Qamish nor Ammar Saleh provided any intelligence to support their claims. END NOTE)

¶5. (C) Minister Alimi asserted that the al-Houthis "have plans to hit Saudi oil facilities," according to informants among the Shia community in Saudi Arabia, information that Alimi said has been passed to the Saudi intelligence services. "We warned you two and a half years ago that a Taliban-like regime was forming in Somalia, but you did not listen to us," Alimi stated. "We are warning you again about the al-Houthis, and you must act." The Minister then handed Congressman Reyes a file that he said substantiated Yemen's allegations of Iranian involvement.

¶6. (C) Embassy's review of the file revealed letters from an unclear source requesting equipment and training from someone in Iran, claiming that the northern tribes of Yemen were "ready for an Islamic revolution." The file also contained a number of documents related to the trial and sentencing of Judge Yahya Hussein al-Dailami and cleric Mohamed al-Muftah,

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who were convicted of being agents of Iran. (NOTE: Both men were pardoned and released from prison in May 2005. END NOTE) Also in the file were documents related to the alleged plans in 2005 for a rocket attack against the Embassy and assassination of the Ambassador. The file also included a threatening letter from a man claiming to be associated with the al-Houthis to the Jewish community in Saada.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: For President Saleh and his senior security team, the al-Houthis' educational and religious links to Iran and Tehran's meddling in other countries in the region appear to be enough to convince them that an Iranian hand is behind the current phase of the al-Houthi insurrection, which has been going on for the past three years. Based on the information the Yemenis have provided thus far, however, Embassy is not ready to make that leap of faith. The same holds true for the Yemenis' allegations regarding the Libyans. Embassy is aggressively following up with Yemeni officials to track down information on any such foreign links, and will report any developments in that regard.

¶8. (C) We will report our thoughts on Saleh's request for equipment and vehicles septel.

¶9. (U) CODEL Reyes did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.
KRAJESKI